

Te Puna o Waiwhetu

[Tay Poona oh Why Fetu] means something akin to 'the new well spring of the Avon' represented visually in the undulating glass frontage on Montreal Street.

Te Puna - well spring, new life

waiwhetu - sparking star light on water

Waiwhetu (capitalised) one of the source springs of the Avon.

If the gallery is the water, the art and artists represented within her are perhaps the twinkling star light, reflected off the water.

Part 1: People in glass houses

An interview with Felicity Milburn, Curator of Contemporary Art at Te Puna o Waiwhetu

Felicity Milburn graduated from Canterbury University with a BA (Hons) in Art History & English in 1995 and has been Curator of Contemporary Art at the McDougall since 1998. She sits on the Gallery's Exhibitions and Acquisitions Committees, is a member of the Acquisitions Advisory Committee for the Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology and the Industry Advisory Board for the New Zealand College of Art and Design.

CS News: What is your primary function as Curator of Contemporary Art?

Researching and developing contemporary exhibitions from the collection and outside the gallery, that is temporary exhibitions. I'm also on the acquisitions committee responsible for developing collections of contemporary art.

What are some of your objectives for the future of contemporary art at the gallery?

With more gallery space we've got options for delving a bit deeper into certain areas. I'm interested in a Pacific presence within the gallery. It's something we did on the odd occasion at the Robert McDougall. We have a responsibility to explore the art being made in New Zealand but also the South Pacific.

What is your take on the relationship of contemporary art and Waiwhetu's collection of traditional works? Is the gallery a house of the old or new and are the two in conflict?

The collection gallery upstairs provides us with an opportunity for people to be led through the historic collection, into the 20th century collection then into the contemporary art collection. They can warm their toes in the pool first. I find there is a preconception

people will find contemporary art frightening or offputting, in fact the public response is very strong, as with Michel Tuffery's *Povi Christkeke* for example. They're pleased to see their old favourites, they also have strong reactions to contemporary work. I see it as a continuum; revealing connections that might exist but also enjoying the contrast of what artists are trying to do. Half the time artists are trying to shock us out of our old perspectives.

What are your personal art interests?

Wide ranging. I'm interested in sculpture, new media work (video, sound) I'm also a bit of a traditionalist (I like a good painting when I see it). My works at home are quite varied. A uniting facet is a shared sense of passion.

So, you'd be interested in some of Picasso's etchings?

Sure. With Picasso it's the obvious passion but his ability to do something with such economy - the immediate connection between the mind, soul and paper.

A few thoughts on a favourite contemporary piece in the Gallery collection.

Lonnie Hutchinson's recently purchased *Sista 7*. It's monumental and comprises seven sections of folded builder's paper hand cut to reveal negative images of all sorts of different things, including Maori designs. The shadows created in behind are quite exquisite. I like the drama of it and the strong personal response to her local Lyttelton environment.

JS

[Lonnie Hutchinson received the 2003 CoCA/Guthrey Travel Award 20 May, as we went to Press].



CvdL

Historic/contemporary: McDougall/Te Puna



Courtesy TPoW



The accepted design was unanimously shortlisted by the professional assessment panel and advisory committee.